

# Car Safety for Tiny Babies

## Premies and Low Birth Weight Babies Need Special Care

**Child  
Safety  
Facts  
2005**

### *Make sure your baby's car seat fits his or her size and needs*

#### The Basics

- Choose a car seat (or car bed) that is the right size and type for your baby's length, weight, and health.
- If the seat or bed is second-hand, make sure it has all its parts and instructions, has not been used in a crash, has any recalls repaired.
- Follow vehicle and car seat manuals. If possible, have a car seat checkup.
- Put the harness over baby's shoulders and through the crotch. Make it snug.
- Install the car seat tightly in the back seat. The back is safest for children up to age 13.
- Be sure the car seat faces the rear to protect the head, neck, and spine.
- For best protection, keep your baby rear-facing as long as possible. At a minimum, do not switch to a forward-facing car seat until **your baby weighs at least 20 pounds and until at least one year after baby's due date.**

#### Resources:

Nat'l Program for Safe Transport. of Children with Special Health Care Needs, Riley Hospital, Indianapolis, IN; 800-755-0912, 317-274-2977, [www.preventinjury.org](http://www.preventinjury.org)

AAP Policy Statement, *Safe Transportation of Premature and Low Birth Weight Infants*, PEDIATRICS, May 1996; 847-228-5005, [www.aap.org/family/cps.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/cps.htm)

Recall and general car safety information, questions: NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline, 888-DASH-2-DOT (888-327-4236) or 800-424-9153 (tty), [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)

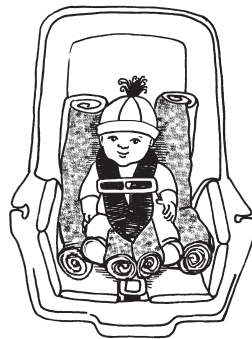
Car seat safety questions, detailed information, recall list: SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., 800-745-SAFE (7233), [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)

Car seat checkups: ask doctor or nurse about a local service or call 866-SEAT-CHECK (866-932-8243), [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)

#### A car seat for a tiny baby

A baby needs a car seat or car bed that fits. Some babies need to lie flat (see below).

Most can use a rear-facing car seat with low harness slots. Small infant-only car seats fit many premies well and are portable. This kind can be very convenient during the first few months.



Try the car seat in your vehicle to make sure it can be installed tightly.

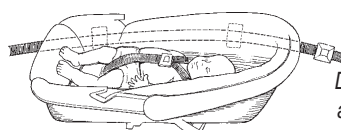
*A premie in an infant car seat with rolled baby blankets and pad in crotch to support her body.*

#### Some premies must lie flat

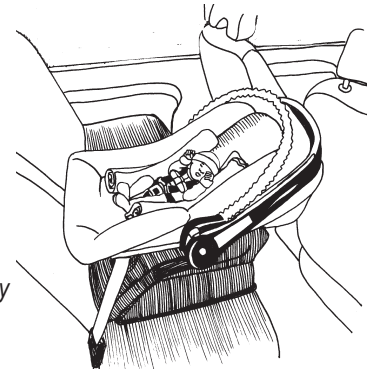
Most babies can ride securely in a semi-reclined, rear-facing car seat with low harness slots. However, some premature babies may have trouble breathing well when sitting up.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that hospital staff monitor **each baby born earlier than 37 weeks** in a car seat before the baby goes home. This is to check for signs of trouble, such as slow heart-beat, too little oxygen in the blood, or periods of not breathing. Make sure to ask your baby's doctor about this.

If your baby shows any of these



*Cosco (Dorel) Dream Ride® for a baby 5 pounds or more.*



*Premie in an infant-only car seat*

#### Choose a car seat with:

- A label stating it is for use from birth if your baby weighs under 5 pounds. Many car seats are limited to babies over 5 pounds (see list on the back).
- A plain harness (no tray or shield). A 5-point harness (with hip straps) may help keep your baby in position better than a 3-point harness.
- Low harness slots (see list on back).

signs, he or she may need to ride lying flat in a crash-tested car bed. Use the car bed until the doctor tells you your baby can sit up safely. Also avoid using a baby seat or swing at home during this time.

#### Tips for car bed use:

- Place with baby's head toward the middle of the vehicle.
- Baby should lie on her back unless the doctor says to do otherwise.



*Angel Ride Infant Car Bed® for premies from 3.5 to 9 pounds*

**Make  
Every Ride  
A Safe Ride**

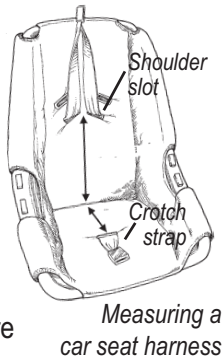


## Checking harness slots

Look for a harness with strap slots placed so it will fit close to your baby's body. Take a tape measure when you shop to find a seat with low slots.

- **Shoulder slots:** use the lowest slots. The lower the slots, the better the fit. Some car seats have slots as low as 5 or 6 inches.

- **Crotch strap distance:** less than 5.5 inches if possible. Some seats have two crotch strap positions. (Put a rolled washcloth in baby's crotch if there is extra space.)



### Car Seats With Low Strap Slots\* 8" or Less to Shoulder Slots lowest slot height listed

[I] = Infant-only seat; [C] = Convertible seat  
(\*list may not cover all seats in stores today)

#### Car seats—weight limit below 5 pounds:

**Britax:** [I] Companion (7.25"), 4-pound min.

**Chicco:** [I] Roma (7.25"), no min. weight

**Combi:** [I] Tyro (6.75"), no min. weight

**Compass:** [I] I-400 (4.75"), no min. weight

**Graco:** [I] Snuggly (7.5"), no min. weight,

[C] ComfortSport (7"), no min. weight

**Peg Perego:** [I] Primo Viaggio (6.5")

#### Car seats—lower weight limit 5 pounds:

**Baby Trend:** [I] LATCH-Loc (5.5")

**Dorel-Cosco/Safety 1st:** [I] Arriva/Turnabout (8"), Eddie Bauer Infant (7"), Designer 22 (7")

**Evenflo:** [I] Port About (4.5"), Embrace (4.5"), Discovery (7"). [C] Titan (7.25"), Triumph (7.5"), Vanguard (7.25"), Victory (7.25")

### Car beds currently available

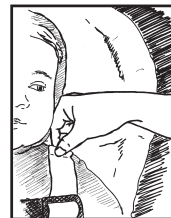
**Angel Guard Products:** Angel Ride Infant Car Bed, 3.5 to 9 pounds; order from Mercury Distributing, 800-815-6330; [www.mercurydistributing.com](http://www.mercurydistributing.com)

**Dorel:** Cosco Dream Ride, 5 to 20 pounds, 800-544-1108, [www.djgusa.com](http://www.djgusa.com)

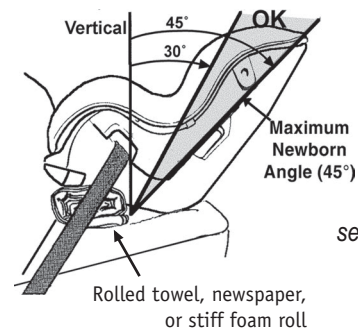
**Snuggly:** Car Bed, 4 to 21 pounds, 800-336-7684, [www.snuggly.com](http://www.snuggly.com)

## Correct car seat use

- Dress your baby in clothes with legs so the harness straps fit between the legs. Avoid a thick snowsuit or wrapping baby in a blanket. Put extra blankets **over** the straps in cold weather.
- Avoid thick padding under or behind your baby. It would make the harness too loose, so your baby could be thrown out in a crash.
- Put shoulder straps in the lowest slots, as close as possible to your baby's shoulders or just below. If straps are too high, use a different seat with lower slots (see list).
- Fit your baby's bottom all the way back in the car seat.
- To help keep your baby comfortable in the car seat, put rolled-up baby blankets beside baby's body and head (see picture on front). A rolled washcloth or diaper in the crotch also can prevent slouching.
- Avoid head support pads you can buy. Those that come with the car seat are okay to use.
- Put the harness over both shoulders and between baby's legs. Make it snug, so you cannot pinch any slack in the shoulder straps (picture, right).
- The chest clip should be at armpit level, but not close to the neck. Try a different model if it is too high.
- Install baby's car seat in the center rear if you can get a tight fit there.
- Buckle the car seat tightly with the seat belt or use new LATCH attachments. LATCH can be used only if both car seat and vehicle have fittings (see instructions).



Pinch test for snug straps



Rear-facing seat tilted back to adjust for slope of the vehicle seat.

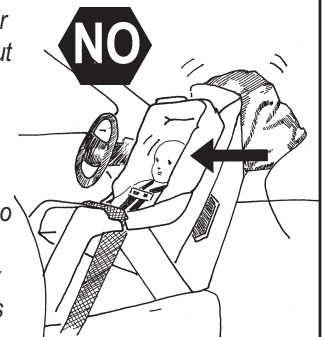
**Your baby should sit reclined**, but not too flat or too upright (see picture, above). Make sure baby's chin does not flop forward, which could block his breathing. Follow the recline guide if the car seat has one, or tilt the car seat back. Baby's head should rest against the back of the car seat. Never tilt the seat lower than 45 degrees.

Some car seats have an adjustable base. If not, wedge a firm roll of cloth or firm foam under it (pictured above).

**NOTE:** If baby has a breathing monitor, oxygen, or other equipment, attach it so it will move as little as possible in a crash. Use a seat belt or wedge it under the vehicle seat on the floor.

### Dangers of Frontal Air Bags

An inflating air bag comes out of the dashboard with tremendous force. It can kill a baby who is in a rear-facing seat or on someone's lap.



Know if your vehicle has air bags. Look in the owner's manual and for warnings on the sun visors or the word "Air Bag" (or the letters "SRS" or "SIR") on the dashboard.

**Always have baby ride in the back seat**, unless the air bag has an on/off switch or sensor, and has been turned off. Always have baby face the rear.